

New principal will take the helm at J.D. Zellerbach Elementary

□ Patricia Erdmann will replace Thom Brzoska when he retires

By Clarice Keating
Post-Record staff

When Patricia Erdmann stood in front of a classroom full of J.D. Zellerbach Elementary School students, she was sold. And, furthermore, Camas School District's human resources department was sold.

"We could see that she had

a great connection with the students," Superintendent Mike Nerland said. "She is going to be an outstanding principal."

Erdmann, a principal intern in the North Kitsap (Wash.) School District, will take over for the school's retiring principal, Thom Brzoska.

"As part of the interview, we got to have lunch with the students at JDZ and we got to teach a lesson," Erdmann said. "I thought that was a great thing to include in an



Patricia Erdmann

interview. It was also a good way to get a feel for what the school was like."

Erdmann has spent the past year as a principal intern in Suquamish and Wolfe elementary schools, which are both approximately the same size as JDZ.

This month she will officially receive her Washington State Administrator Certificate.

"I was really interested in finding a school in a small community," said Erdmann on why she was drawn to

Camas. "I really believe that small communities have the best chance of having strong connections between the school and the families than a larger community. When you have really tight links, kids benefit."

While she is relatively new to administration, Erdmann is no stranger to education.

After earning a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Erdmann landed her first teaching job in 1968. She has 18 years of experience teaching fourth- through sixth-graders in six different

states.

Erdmann said she thought she would always be a teacher. But then she surprised everyone, herself included, when she enrolled for the University of Washington's Danforth Educational Leadership Program.

"I realized that I wanted to have a broader influence than just my 20 students at a time," she said.

The internship experience included creating mentoring programs for at-risk stu-

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— Mike Nerland, superintendent

See Principal, page A3

Principal

Continued from page A1

ents; curriculum alignment; promoting anti-bullying programs; and investigating in-school and community projects to address educational challenges for American Indian children.

"She brings a wealth of experience," Nerland said. "She also places a high value on building personal relationships with family, staff, students and the community."

Getting to know the community is how Erdmann said she plans to spend her sum-

mer. In the fall, her next goal is to get to know the students, staff and maintain a positive school climate. She also said she excitedly anticipates planning for the grade-level reconfiguration that will take place when the new Liberty Middle School opens in fall

2006.

"I look forward to working on how to redesign a school that will suit the needs of staff and the students, and the needs of the community," Erdmann said.